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MENTORING AT-RISK YOUTH: AN INTERVENTION FOR SKILL BUILDING  
IN PROBLEM SOLVING, DECISION MAKING, AND  
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

by

Deborah J. Heater

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2000

Deb,  
This thesis is better,  
my love for teaching is deeper,  
And I am a fuller person  
for having worked with you  
Thank you,  
Deb

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## ABSTRACT

Mentoring At-risk Youth: An Intervention for Skill Building in  
Problem Solving, Decision Making, and Conflict Resolution

by

Deborah J. Heater, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2000

Major Professor: Dr. Thomas R. Lee  
Department: Family and Human Development

Low interpersonal skill level in younger youth has shown to lead to higher rates of delinquent behavior in older adolescents. Utah State University Extension established a program titled Youth and Families with Promise (YFP). This is a research-based mentoring program where mentors were screened, matched to individual youth, and activities planned that focus on 8 of the Search Institute's 40 assets. The program provided services for 156 at-risk youth ages 7 to 16 in six Utah counties, 66 of whom completed a pretest and posttest assessment. This research-based, intervention/prevention program has shown that the interventions used were effective in building skills in youth, assisting them in planning for the future, making better decisions, and resolving conflict nonviolently. This research evaluates three of those eight assets: problem solving, decision making, and peaceful conflict resolution.



Participating college-age mentors from the same six counties were matched with one or two at-risk youth. Group family activities based on the three assets were held monthly. By using a youth self-assessment pre- and posttest survey and a posttest survey for parents, teachers, and mentors, the program was evaluated. This research project is a study of the YFP at-risk youth mentoring program during an 8-month period.

Although results were not statistically significant, youth gained more assets and had a higher score on the posttest, with the exception of four items: avoidance of making decisions, hanging out with troubled friends, doing what friends want even if it will get them into trouble, and pushing back when they themselves are pushed.

(99 pages)

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my children Donald James (DeJay), Sarena Jo,  
Samantha Rae, and Lea Ruth. Our love means  
more to me than you will ever know.

When the storm clouds gather,  
and I'm losin' my way,  
Don't send me no Angels,  
cuz I've got my own.

Ricky Van Shelton (1988)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Tom Lee and Dr. Glen Jenson for the privilege of working with them on the mentoring program, and for making available to me the data set from this program. Gentlemen, it has been fun. I would also like to thank committee member, mentor, and friend, Mrs. Deborah Ascione, for her continued support of me and my education. Her assistance with this project has been crucial. Also a special thank you to Randy Jones and Roxanne Pfister who saved the day more than once.

I would like to give special thanks to my colleagues, friends, and family for their complete assurance that I could do this. Your belief in me kept me going, thank you all.

A special thanks to Dr. C. W. Johnson for the very idea that I could do this and for the desire to reach for excellence.

Deborah J. Heater

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Adolescent Social Problems

Of the many problems society faces today, one of its most challenging is the welfare of its youth with the vast choices, decisions, and conflicts these young people face. Early sexual activity, substance abuse, and school dropout are just a few of the problems affecting youth. Results of youthful inability to solve problems with socially desirable outcomes keeps our correction facilities and prisons full to capacity. Studies show there are connections between adolescent inability to solve problems, resolve conflict, make good decisions, and adolescent behavior problems that extend into adulthood (Garbarino, 1998; Haynie & Alexander, 1997). Intervention is needed for those who are beginning the road to more risky behavior and prevention measures are needed for youth at lower risk (Caplan et al., 1992).

Risky behavior may include early sexual activity without the knowledge, or belief that a sexually transmitted disease (STD) can happen to them. Incidence rates for STDs has "increased dramatically" in recent years with adolescents exhibiting some of the highest rates of any group (Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998). The United States has the highest teen pregnancy rates in the western industrialized world with a cost of \$7 billion annually (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1997) and the

rates of STDs among adolescents and young adults are on the rise (Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998).

Research on substance abuse among Utah adolescent arrestees finds 24% of them spending \$25 to \$100 a week during the past year to support their habit, and 40% had three or more sex partners during the past year (Hossain & Hossain, 1997). By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 54.1% of the nation's youth have used drugs (SAMHSA, 1998) and 5 out of every 100 high school students who enrolled at the beginning of the year drop out without finishing a high school program (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Some drop out to care for a new baby, while others are more interested in drug use. Children who begin using substances by age 15 are at higher risk for antisocial behavior, substance abuse, and general maladaptation in young adulthood (Dishion, Capaldi, & Yoerger, 1999). There is reason to believe that these behaviors will continue into adulthood. "The number of arrests for drug abuse violations remained relatively unchanged from 1997 to 1998 for both juveniles and adults" (Bureau of Justice Statistics U.S. Department of Justice, 1999, n.p.).

Those that are participating in early sexual activity are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases and noncompletion of high school. These youth can become involved in a cycle of repeated behaviors and consequences. Teen pregnancy is a factor in whether or not young parents finish school (Allen, Philliber, Herrling, & Kupermine, 1997) and health

problems such as STDs can be passed from mother to child (Miller, 1998).

Substance use, such as alcohol, before the age of 15 leaves youth at risk for mental health problems, anti-social behavior, and stronger drug abuse patterns (Dishion et al., 1999).

According to Caplan et al. (1992), 25% of children ages 10-17 may be extremely vulnerable to the negative consequences of multiple high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, school failure, and delinquency. Another 25% are at moderate risk. Prevention measures are recommended for the other 50% who are at low risk. However, interventions for the moderate to high-risk youth in the area of conflict resolution and problem-solving skills are a must (Caplan et al., 1992). Targeting the factors that lead to youth problems would enable society to implement interventions to reduce the likelihood of youth involvement in problem behavior.

### Risk and Protective Factors

Youth with limited social skills suffer frequently with low peer interaction, "low peer acceptance" (Cunliffe, 1992, p. 3), and greater peer pressure to participate in less socially desirable activities. Youth may begin participating in behaviors with negative outcomes. "Individual factors that can serve to protect children from risk include well-developed problem-solving skills and intellectual abilities" (Bogenschneider, Small, & Riley, 1992, p. 3). Children's behavior in social problem-solving situations has been



linked to peer group success, emergence of antisocial behavior, and child psychopathology (Vuchinich, Angelelli, & Gatherum, 1996). Low problem-solving ability is related to interpersonal negativity, low marital satisfaction, and adolescent substance abuse (Rueter & Conger, 1993).

Recent research also suggests that exposure to violence during childhood and adolescence may lead to substance abuse, delinquency, and adult criminality, and contributes to emotional problems (National Institute of Justice, 1996). Garbarino (1998) stated that children who live in a violent society will "reflect back the worst" of that society (p. 1). In a longitudinal study of 3- to 6-year-old children, Dunn and Herrera (1997) found that young children were less likely to take the perspective of the other person if they were angry. Those who exhibited greater understanding of the other person were less likely to use violent threats in conflict resolution. Kellam, Rebok, Ialongo, and Mayer (1994) found a link between childhood aggressive behavior, delinquency, and violent behavior, and heavy drug use in adolescence and adulthood. Many youth do not know how to solve conflict without violence and more than half would signify that the problem is solved by walking away (Haynie & Alexander, 1997). Research reported by Smetana, Yau, and Hanson (1991) stated that "Montemayor and Hanson (1985) found that 47% of conflicts with parents are resolved by walking away, 38% are resolved by adolescents giving in to their parents, and only 15% are marked by negotiation" (p. 190). Training youth to resolve conflict without

anger and to understand another's point of view may shift the violence directed against others and self-damaging behaviors to a more positive outcome.

### Social Skills Training

Social skills training can be an important tool in prevention and intervention in adolescent problems. Social skills training increases warmth, decreases rivalry, stabilizes levels of competition, lowers problematic sibling behaviors, and reduces status difference between siblings (Kramer & Radey, 1997). Cunliffe (1992) asserted that youth who have low social skills have trouble determining the positive and negative effects of a social situation. Well-developed social and interpersonal skills have been found to assist youth in making choices in behaviors that attract and maintain supportive friends, maintain good relationships with parents, and help youth remain in positions of choosing activities. Teaching youth how to recognize and resist negative social influences may strengthen them to resist, for example, early sexual involvement (Bogenschneider et al., 1992). Training youth in refusal skills has proven useful in adolescent decision making (Benson, Blyth, & Roehlkepartain, 1995). Johnson and Green (1993) in their study of early adolescent girls found decision-making training led to higher contraceptive use.

Similarly, Bry, Conboy, and Bisgay (1986) found that family problem-

solving training can reduce drug use and school failure. Social skills training has proven to be effective in improving problem-solving ability (Cunliffe, 1992). In a case study of a 15-year-old male, Nangle, Carr-Nangle, and Hansen (1994) found that, with training, the subject's rate of positive interactions increased steadily. The Office of Juvenile Justice published a study (Shure, 1999) which demonstrated positive outcomes for youth when they concentrated on the thinking process of the youth. Taylor and Hardin (1997) also found that intervention programs based on problem-solving training with youth were successful.

Caplan et al. (1992) conducted a study on conflict resolution and problem solving and their connection to social adjustment and alcohol use. They found that intervention that focused on problem-solving training was successful in reducing substance abuse. Using a prevention/intervention model with peer mentoring may reduce the amount of unresolved conflict in the lives of youth.

### Mentoring

Studies show that if a child has at least one significant relationship with someone who accepts them regardless of their temperament, attractiveness, or intelligence, they are more resilient (Werner, in Bogenschneider et al., 1992; Benson 1997; Benson et al., 1995; Scales & Gibbons, 1996). McCubbin, Needle, and Wilson (1985) found that risk-

reducing influences in a child's life were "ventilation (venting of feelings), close friendship support, and social support" (p. 51). A peer mentoring relationship can supply the opportunity for youth to vent their feelings, gain support, and acquire confidence in social situations thereby gaining more social support.

The mentoring relationship allows for the opportunity of casual conversation in which the youth can express feelings, thoughts, and emotions, thus giving the opportunity for the mentor to express more mature options to possible problem solutions. Time spent with someone who exhibits positive, self-protective, and healthy behavior is also time the youth is not engaged in risky behavior. While with a mentor, youth are engaged in structured activities with someone they and their families can trust to keep their best interests in mind. This time is an opportunity for the parents to let go and not worry about their child or their activities, which makes the parents' life less stressful. Mentor and youth may be at the local library doing homework together, which means the youth is not at the local convenience store practicing delinquent behavior.

### Problem

There have not been efforts to combine the benefits of mentoring with the benefits of social skills training. It has been assumed that social skills are developed by a mentoring relationship through role-modeling. Also there

is a lack of research on the effectiveness of mentoring programs in helping youth develop social skills and how these skills may help prevent adolescent problem behaviors. There is a lack of curricula suitable for use in a mentoring context with at-risk youth.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of a mentoring program that is designed to assist at-risk youth in the development of social skills. It will also assess if the targeting of social skills will help youth practice positive behavior more often and whether youth gain a more optimistic outlook on school and their ability to solve problems, resolve conflict, and choose less risky behavior. This study covers a 1-year period during which the youth were involved in the YFP at-risk youth mentoring program.

It will also measure parents' perceptions of their youth as a more positively social being who has a renewed effort to do well in school. A secondary goal of this program is to help the parents feel more effective and confident in their role with their youth. This study will evaluate whether that takes place.

### Research Questions

Can a mentoring program utilize a social skills focus to increase skill

development in youth at-risk? Will skill development in decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution increase other social skills and reduce behavior problems? This prevention/intervention program studied youth between the ages of 7 and 16 years to determine if a mentoring program with trained mentors did assist youth in gaining protective factors and reducing risk factors. Scores on self- and other evaluations were used to determine if there was an increase in social skills after 6 to 8 months of training in a mentoring atmosphere. It also assessed whether there was a decrease in problem behaviors and an increase in behaviors that are positive aspects in the life of the youth such as eating nutritious meals, saving money, and having youth leadership opportunities. These behaviors are referred to in this study as thriving behaviors.

### Conceptual Framework

A risk and protective factor model was used in this study. This is the idea that the more protective factors and fewer risk factors a youth has, the better able he/she will be to resist problem behaviors. Conversely, the more risk factors and fewer protective factors, including social skills, the more risky behaviors he/she will have.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Adolescent Social Problems

Society is increasingly impacted by the problems among youth. These problems include substance abuse, school dropout, youth violence, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime. Immediate costs to society include replacement for stolen and damaged property, safety precautions such as security systems, the rising expense of physical and mental health care, and time-loss from work. Indirect costs to society are lost worker productivity, rising insurance premiums, and rising costs of products due to petty crimes such as property theft, vandalism, and legal assistance. These problems affect public safety and quality of life, and are costly to society in terms of juvenile corrections and public assistance to teen mothers. Measurable long-term effects include increased costs for rehabilitation, welfare, and correctional programs. Difficult to measure are the long-term effects of missed opportunity costs, negative peer group pressure, and general deviant behavior, such as disruption in school. An even more complex indirect cost is the reality of "human costs of children growing up in families unable to nurture their young . . . ." (Schorr & Schorr, 1989, p. 3).

Violence among youth affects some people many times as they leave their home (Fagan, 1998). The National Institute of Justice (1996) has

reported that "35 percent of the young people who lived in a high-crime neighborhood had witnessed a shooting during the past year compared to only 2 percent of those who lived in a low-crime neighborhood" (p. 2). Concern over violence leads Americans to spend \$4.7 billion a year on home security (Schorr & Schorr, 1989). School, traditionally thought of as a safe haven for youth, is also threatened with youth violence. Many good teachers quit rather than subject themselves to the danger some youth present in the classroom. The day that only inner-city-dwellers need to worry about walking to the store after dark has passed. Crime has moved to the suburbs and rural communities, and has crossed socioeconomic boundaries (Guterman & Cameron, 1997).

"Recent studies indicate that 80 percent to 90 percent of children living in an urban setting are direct victims of, or witness to, significant acts of violence in their neighborhoods, schools, or communities" (Guterman & Cameron, 1997, p. 495). For all the direct victims of violent crime there are an uncountable number of others who are an indirect victim. "Every time I realize that I have not enjoyed the cool night air nor marveled at the full moon, I know that one does not have to be robbed at gunpoint to be a victim of crime" (White, in Schorr & Schorr, 1989, p. 4).

Nationally, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has reported the juvenile arrest rate as 2.8 million arrests a year of youth up to age 18. Twenty-six percent of those offenders were females and



32% were under the age of 15. Of the 2.8 million, 123,400 arrests were for violent crimes, 838,000 were related to property damage, and 422,900 were drug and alcohol-related arrests. Fortunately, national rates were down somewhat for the last few years (Snyder, 1997). Yet we are still spending \$50,000 for each prison bed when these juvenile offenders reach adult status (Schorr & Schorr, 1989). Kumpfer and Alvarado (1998) in a report commissioned by OJJDP cited delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, youth violence, and early sexual involvement as "grave causes for concern in this country" (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 1998, p.1)

Juvenile offense rates for Utah in 1997 also reflect a decline (Utah Kids Count, 1999). In spite of this decline, juvenile offenders still need our attention. In 1997 alone, there were 1,384 life-endangering felonies, 5,052 other felonies, and 46,282 misdemeanors perpetrated by juveniles 17 years old and younger in the state of Utah (Utah Kids Count, 1999).

The number of youth who have experimented with drugs such as tobacco and alcohol is growing (Bahr et al., 1999). Drug abuse violations among those under age 18 in the US for 1997 numbered 220,700 (Snyder, 1997). In a Utah State study of 197 juvenile arrestees, Hossain and Hossain (1997) report that 94.4% have used alcohol in their lifetime with 65% using in the past 30 days. Marijuana numbers were even higher, with 69.5% using in the last 30 days. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA, 1998) reports that, of the total population, 9.9% of youth ages 12-

17 had used an illicit drug in the past month. In 1991, eighth-grade youth reported that 18.7% of them had used an illicit drug in their lifetime. Of eighth graders in 1998, 29.0% had used in their lifetime. In 1991, 44.1% of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade youth reported using illicit drugs in their lifetime. In 1998, 54.1% of the nation's youth had used an illicit drug in their lifetime. More than 50% of our nation's youth have experimented with drugs by the time they leave high school (SAMHSA, 1998).

Another problem youth face is teen pregnancy. The rates (per 1,000) for Utah teen births, ages 15-17, have risen from 1,134 in 1987 to 1,438 in 1997. A great majority of these births were to single mothers, 670 in 1987 and 1,106 in 1997 (Utah Kids Count, 1999). For every youth that becomes pregnant at least three lives (each parent and the child) are impacted. Others who may be affected are grandparents who thought life would soon be a little easier. They now find themselves faced with the decision of whether or not to take responsibility for the new family. The school system will now offer the teen mother special classes to finish her high school education. The teen father may have to drop out of school or spend less time on his homework to support this child with a full-time job. School dropout rates for 7<sup>th</sup>- through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade youth in the state of Utah in 1996/97 were 3.34%, up from the 1992/93 school year by 1.41% (Utah Kids Count, 1999).

Costs of supporting the child include prenatal care, clothing, and food.

In the state of Utah alone, 13% of the children in 1993 lived in poverty (that is up 2.9% from 1979) (Utah Kids Count, 1999). Welfare services will more than likely be called upon to supplement this family's income with special programs such as government subsidized prenatal care. These programs and entitlements are paid for by state and federal taxes. With the percentages of low birth weight babies rising from 57.5 per one-thousand in 1987 to 65.9 per one-thousand in 1997 (Utah Kids Count, 1999), these programs are necessary.

The United States has one of the highest teen birth rates in the world with costs of "at least \$7 billion annually" (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1997). Of these pregnancies, 80% were unintended births to single mothers (Henshaw, 1998; National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1997). Allen et al. (1997) reported the costs reaching between \$9 and \$29 billion annually for teen pregnancy. Allen et al. (1997) proposed that there is a relationship between teen pregnancy and academic failure. Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school and more likely to end up on welfare. Their children are more likely to be low birth weight, perform poorly in school, and be at greater risk for abuse and neglect (George & Lee, 1997; Maynard, 1996; National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1990; Wolfe & Perozek, 1997). Sons of teen mothers are 13% more likely to end up in prison. Daughters are 22% more likely to become teen mothers themselves (Maynard, 1996; Moore, Driscoll, & Lindberg, 1998).

### Risk and Protective Factors

The problems that youth face today have many members of society wondering what can be done to reduce negative outcomes. An understanding of risk factors that lead to problem behaviors and protective factors that lead to healthy behaviors may provide answers. Programs that recognize risk and resiliency factors are intervening in the lives of youth and making a difference (Schorr & Schorr, 1989).

Some of these factors have been identified by the Search Institute of Minneapolis MN, through a study of 250,000 public school students in 460 communities (Benson, 1997). Search identified 40 factors called developmental assets. If youth in this study had a majority of these assets, they were less likely to exhibit problem behaviors. The fewer assets they had, the more likely they were to have behavior problems. The conclusions drawn from this study were that as a society we have been not only letting our youth down, but also blaming youth for the deficit in their support system. Also, we have failed to protect them from abuse and have failed to remove roadblocks that stand in the way of healthy development (Benson, 1997).

Without needed support, youth are at risk for more abuse and even taller roadblocks. Assets such as family support, parent involvement in school, and parental standards and discipline decline between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. A decline in these assets increases the likelihood of a youth participating in risky behavior such as unprotected sexual activity and drug

abuse. These assets are of particular interest to this study because they focus on a risk and protective factor approach (Benson, 1997; Scales & Gibbons, 1996).

In a similar risk-factor approach, Bogenschneider et al. (1992) proposed that risk factors might be reduced in youth the same way risk factors in a heart disease patient were reduced. For example, by focusing on lifestyle changes, such as increased exercising, modified diet, and smoking cessation, a person can reduce the risk of heart disease. This idea may be compared to life-style changes that can reduce the risks of delinquent, alienated, or rebellious behavior in youth. Bogenschneider et al. (1992) identified three factors, good communication, positive conflict resolution, and appropriate decision-making skills, as possible changes needed to reduce risk in youth. Research has shown that many risk factors are related to youth violence, delinquency, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy. This thesis explores three possible protective factors (decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution) and how they are related to the above risk factors.

### Decision Making

Without direction, many youth flounder in indecision until someone else decides for them, a parent, a community leader, or a peer. Hammond, Keeney, and Raiffa (1999) have suggested that it is best to teach youth to be proactive when making decisions. Thinking about objectives before making the decision requires a focus on what is wanted and needed (what the goals,

hopes, and expectations are) and a clarification of objectives. With few options, youth may perceive that they are trapped on one road only.

With skills such as family communication, problem solving, decision making, and peaceful conflict resolution, youth are better able to see that there is more than one way to solve the dilemma of choice. Options and ability are two key elements in making decisions. Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg (1989, in Johnson & Green, 1993, ) identified "social cognitive ability as a potential perspective for understanding adolescent sexual decision making" (p.1). Youth with lower social skills are at risk for making decisions that will negatively affect their future. Misuse or nonuse of contraceptives in sexual activity is one way they may be at risk, and violent behavior is another. Haynie and Alexander (1997) found that youth can find positive solutions in most cases studied. However, there were a few youth in their study that projected negative consequences resulting in the rape of a peer. Just as surprising was "how often group retaliation was suggested as a solution to a conflict between two individuals" (Haynie & Alexander, 1997, p. 170).

Adult communication skills are necessary for youth to facilitate the expression of their thoughts and feelings (Stewart & Logan, 1993). In many cases youth who are at risk for juvenile delinquency, violent behavior, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse feel very much alone in the world. There is no one with whom they think they can talk. Care givers lack communication

skills themselves (Hart & Risley, 1995). In their study of communications between children and their parents, Hart and Risley (1995) found that there is a class difference in verbal communication. Professional parents speak 2,153 words per hour to their children and families on welfare speak 616 words per hour to their children. Many adults do not have the skills needed to listen to someone with an open mind and with the speaker's best interest at heart (Hamilton, Asarnow, & Thompson, 1996; Tallman & Miller, 1974).

### Problem Solving

Family problem-solving training may be the best way for youth to learn skills that are modeled by other members of the family (Blechman, 1980). Problem-solving training for youth must include the family unit with which they are working out concerns. The interaction style of the family, most especially the parents, has an influence on the social competence level of children. "Children with poorer social competence and more behavioral problems were more likely to have parents who showed negative affect during family problem-solving tasks" (Hamilton et al., 1996, p. 83). Similarly, Hart and Risley (1995) found that of the 616 words per day being spoken to children in welfare class families, 80% of those words are negative. Therefore, working to expand expectations and teaching the ability to identify multiple options could facilitate a family's ability to solve problems in a more

beneficial manner, and enhance the ability of children in those families to learn problem-solving skills.

Rueter and Conger (1993) looked at the relationship between interaction style, problem-solving behavior, and family problem-solving effectiveness. A warm interaction style was directly related to problem-solving behavior, and indirectly related to the effectiveness of family problem solving. They found that a mature, helpful, and involved problem-solving behavior would more likely come from family members who had displayed warmth and supportiveness a year earlier in a non-problem-solving setting. Supportiveness fosters better problem-solving behavior. They further suggested that people who "engage in anger and hostility while discussing their problems are likely to experience repetitive problem-solving failure" (p. 98).

Problem-solving competence is important for many reasons, among which is self-confidence. Blechman (1980) found that students improved significantly academically and rated themselves as better students as a result of problem-solving training. The feeling of self-confidence and ability to solve problems may assist youth in navigating the problems many teenagers face in adolescence. Vuchinich et al. (1996) found that "the effectiveness of family problem-solving behavior deteriorated during pre-adolescence" (p. 1285). With adequate skills this deterioration could possibly be curtailed.

McCubbin et al. (1985) found a relationship between adolescent



health risk behavior and youth who live with family stress and critical factors. They concluded that adolescents view substance use as a coping mechanism when faced with family stress (McCubbin et al., 1985).

### Conflict Resolution

Youth who have trouble resolving conflict, solving problems, or making good decisions may turn to less desirable behavior that can result in juvenile court, fines, or even long-term confinement. In a report for the OJJDP, Crawford and Bodine (1999) found that family conflict was related to substance abuse, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and violence in youth. As a result of their conflict resolution program, the youth were more able to

manage conflicts while experiencing more social support and less victimization from others than before. Improving relations with others led to increased self-esteem, more positive feelings of well being, and decreased feelings of anxiety and depression. Along with more self-esteem, students perceived themselves as having greater personal control over other factors. The increased sense of personal control and positive feelings of well-being led to improved academic performance (Crawford & Bodine, 1999, p. 70).

A positive feeling of well-being can mean a lot to youth. One disturbed youth said, "Mom, can I tell you something? I'm worried. All the boys I grew up

with are dead. I lie awake at night and think about it. What am I supposed to do?" (Hechinger in Crawford & Bodine, 1999, p. 72). The question was from a 13-year-old boy in New Orleans and caused his mother to realize that, of a group of 6-year-old kids who started school together 7 years earlier, only her son was still living. All the others had met with violent deaths (Hechinger in Crawford & Bodine, 1999). This young teen lives with violent acts as a matter of course in his daily life. With more conflict resolution skills taught and advocated in communities, youth can learn to resolve conflicts nonviolently. With greater social and communication skills, youth will be less afraid and more confident in conflict situations.

Unsuccessful interaction with others prevents youth from living a full life. Dishion et al. (1999) found antisocial behavior at ages 9 to 10 to be a clear predictor of marijuana and alcohol use and poor academic achievement during adolescence. Some act out with violence or juvenile crime; other antisocial youth are withdrawn, rejected by their peers, and unable to form friendships. They lack the skills to communicate and the ability to be empathetic toward others. Communication and empathy are two key aspects in a person's ability to successfully resolve conflict in a social situation (Stewart & Logan, 1993).

"High-anger individuals engage in more verbally and physically intimidating expressions of anger, employ less effective interpersonal communication skills, and report greater tendencies to use both suppressive

and outwardly less controlled and more negative anger expression styles" (Deffenbacher, Lynch, Oetting, & Kemper, 1996, p. 150). High-anger individuals are more likely to use alcohol and abuse drugs and experience domestic violence problems that can be exacerbated by alcohol consumption (Deffenbacher et al., 1996). Anger can be a form of frustration felt by youth when they feel their world is out of control. They may feel insecure, unsafe, or not know who to turn to or who to trust to keep them safe.

Schools have long been thought of as places we can trust to keep our children safe. This is no longer the case. West, Young, Mitchem, and Calderella (1998) found that in the past year, three million acts of violence and theft took place in our nation's schools. Each day more than 100,000 weapons are brought to school and approximately 40 children and youth are wounded or killed by these weapons. Various types of antisocial behavior among youth can be decreased by developing certain protective assets (West et al., 1998).

One trend that has researchers concerned is age of onset for delinquent behavior. Day and Hunt (1996) found that youth who engage in delinquent behavior, such as stealing and fighting, before the age of 12, will most likely continue the practice throughout their childhood. The program being studied used training materials in a mentor atmosphere with youth ages seven to 16 from six counties in Utah. College-age mentors worked with the youth in targeted areas after receiving training. In an evaluation of a

past mentoring project, Royse (1998) found that the younger aged participants benefitted the most.

### Prevention / Intervention

Intervention programs have been somewhat successful, in many instances increasing youth skills or assets. Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, and Hill (1999) found that by using "developmentally adjusted social competence training for children in grades one through six" the children had a "greater commitment and attachment to school" (p. 226). These researchers concluded that intervention programs can "have enduring effects on reducing violent behavior, heavy drinking, and sexual intercourse by age 18" (p. 226).

Factors have been found that correlate with increasing the ability of youth to solve problems, peacefully resolve conflict, and make successful decisions. McCubbin et al. (1985) found that adolescents coped with stress using fewer health risk behaviors when they had positive peer pressure or were involved in structured peer teaching programs, peer counseling, and peer participation programs.

Certain developmental tasks are the jobs of adolescents. Problems may arise with the reaction of adults to the natural process of teens as they navigate these developmental areas. These tasks include a shift from the concrete stage to the formal stage of logical reasoning. They are beginning

to look at the world from a less egocentric perspective and to include reflective and abstract reasoning. The tasks also include formation of self-concept, social skills, autonomy, and internalized values (Irvin, 1996).

Personal identity or self-concept may be difficult for some youth because the culture of their peer group or family may conflict with the dominant culture in which they live (Phinney, 1989). Minority youth with successful role models may learn to negotiate the system with a positive advantage. It has been argued that programs that shower youth with praise may not be as effective as those that present safe, meaningful, and successful experiences, that lead to the long-lasting development of positive identity and self-esteem in youth (Irvin, 1996).

Social skill development is important because it is reported that youth with harmonious friendships tend to do better in school (Irvin, 1996). Some studies show that youth are more likely to follow the advice of adults than their peer group in matters concerning their long-term future (Irvin, 1996). Yet, peer groups are advantageous for the youthful purpose of testing new skills and opportunities for experiencing success (Irvin, 1996). Scales and Gibbons (1996) suggested that youth are building "assets and avoiding risks" while they are participating in their primary activity, which is socializing. Autonomy is important to youth for forming their individual identity. Scales and Gibbons pointed out that disagreements are a means by which youth let adults know that their concepts and expectations are changing but, early

separation from adults is not desired because youth risk becoming susceptible to negative peer pressure and risky behaviors (Irvin, 1996). Therefore, activities with peers (or a mentor) may assist the youth in remaining in contact with their families if those interactions and role models are positive.

The following are examples of intervention programs that are targeted toward decision making, conflict resolution and problem solving skill building in early adolescents. The Youth Environment Service (YES) program (1996) has a goal of rehabilitating delinquents and preventing at-risk youth from entering the juvenile justice system. Using environmental work and education programs, several agencies have developed a partnership with federal, state, local, and private agencies. With this goal in mind, researchers developed the following guidelines: It must be a mutually beneficial partnership arrangement, it must be a team effort in establishing mutual expectations, it must be a planned program, and the staff must have experience with work programs for youth and possess an ability to make key decisions.

Kellam et al. (1994) looked at the possibility of a successful intervention that could interrupt the stable course of violent behavior in youth through childhood. Five different urban Baltimore communities with four or five schools in each community participated in the study. Researchers followed 1,000 youth and tested these youth starting in first grade and

followed them through to sixth grade. They assigned individual first-grade classrooms to experimental and control groups implementing two interventions, Mastery Learning (ML) and The Good Behavior Game (GBG). The ML indicates and measures poor achievement and mastery of skills. GBG promotes good behavior through reward and recognition. Comparing the results from the two interventions, they found that aggression remained fairly stable over the 6-year period for both males and females, but males were at a higher aggression rate than females. However, aggression in males was reduced in those who showed aggressive tendencies in first grade, and were then introduced to interventions.

Another conclusion drawn from the findings was that children who were medium aggressors (not aggressive by nature) were more likely to improve behavior than those who had a more severe problem with aggression. The researchers proposed that the youth not aggressive by nature were socialized to this behavior and, therefore, can be socialized away from antisocial behavior (Kellam et al., 1994). Intervention programs for these youth that focus on key areas may act as socializing agents through which medium aggressors can learn to be less aggressive.

Other ingredients of programs that can be successful with youth at risk have been proposed by Hughes (1995). These include having a theoretical model and research evidence that is sensitive to environmental cultural contexts, addresses the risk factors and provides protection from harm,

changes the institutions, and creates programs of sufficient intensity and duration to make a difference. Suggestions for activities to accomplish these goals are as follows: empower program participants, use a variety of teaching methods, and facilitate access to resources including those dealing with basic living needs. To maintain a program over time, Hughes (1995) stated it is essential to involve the clients and many community organizations, develop secure financial resources for programs, develop a long-range evaluation to guide program implementation and program outcomes, and create a positive and supportive work environment for staff.

Dryfoos (1990) identified the following 11 common components of prevention programs that have succeeded: intensive individual attention, community wide multi-agency collaborative approaches, early identification and intervention, locus in schools, administration of school programs by agencies outside of schools, location of programs outside of schools, arrangements for training, social skills training, engagement of peers in interventions, involvement of parents, and link to the world of work. Dryfoos also identified five common concepts of successful programs: there is no one solution to the problem, high-risk behaviors are interrelated, a package of services is required within each community, the timing of intervention is critical, and continuity of effort must be maintained. Dryfoos further proposed that the best intervention programs are intensive, comprehensive, and flexible. Dryfoos found that several problem behaviors could be traced to a



number of common factors, and that success for youth will happen when risk factors are addressed across multiple levels of intervention. She reported that intensive studies on comprehensive programs show similar success rates for "altering the trajectory of participants" (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 242).

### Social Skills Training

Gresham (1997) proposed that "social skills represent a class of behavior that is perhaps the most important and functional for children and youth with emotional and behavior disorders." (p. 233). In their study with siblings, Kramer and Radey (1997) found that early training did enhance social skills. And in a study by Cunliffe (1992) of inpatient and outpatient youth assigned to a treatment facility in Canada, youth who received social skills training improved their problem-solving ability, gained control over their choices of behavior, and decreased the probability that they would engage in aggressive behavior.

Using their findings, the Search Institute identified 40 assets and developed activities based on concrete ideas (Benson, Galbraith, & Espeland, 1998). They found that the more assets the youth had, the more resistant they were to negative peer pressure and deviant behavior. The seventh section of their book presents activities dealing with social skills. The first in this thesis, planning and decision-making skills (asset #32), addresses the concern that youth know how to plan ahead and make

competent choices. The second, resistance skills (asset #35), will tap a dimension of problem-solving. The third asset skill to be addressed in this project is peaceful conflict resolution (asset #36), which deals with youth seeking to resolve conflicts nonviolently.

### Planning and Decision Making

Planning one's own life is an essential skill for adults. Adolescence is a time of exploration that we use to develop decision-making skills.

Berzonsky (1992) pointed out that identity development influences the way in which adolescents cope with potential stressors and make decisions. Without a caring adult, youth may drift with the winds of opportunity and explore every door that opens to them. This could prove to be a dangerous time for youth if they do not use discretion in the decisions they face every day. This skill may not develop with a positive outcome. A caring significant adult can give youth the one thing they need to help them decide which opportunities they will take advantage of and which doors they will walk through to explore.

In the case of teen pregnancy it is proposed that "sexual intercourse is the primary risk factor; pregnancy rates could be lowered if (the) onset of sexual intercourse was delayed or its frequency reduced" (Miller, 1993, p. 12). Allen et al. (1997) found that one outreach program for teen pregnancy worked well when they "enhanced participants' competence in decision making . . . " (p. 738).

Most assuredly, moral and character development will happen with or without teacher or parental influence. It develops within a social environment that can be adult guided. Parents and educators can raise awareness, increase logical thinking of consequences, and enhance empathy concerning values and behavior (Irvin, 1996). Five promising strategies were identified by Benson and Roehlkepartain (1992) that help society to rethink current practices: reduce deficits and increase assets, help young people say yes to positive alternatives; strengthen institutions that support youth, families, schools, churches, and community organizations; involve youth in caring for others by direct service; become more systematic with schools and communities developing comprehensive plans; and work together in communities.

### Problem Solving

"The best we can hope for is to prepare them to be able to adjust to change and to be problem solvers so that they can effectively deal with change" (Tallman, 1993, p. 156). Blechman (1980) wrote a training program as an early intervention for at-risk youth titled Family Problem Solving Training and evaluated it with youth who were poor problem solvers. She found that the children "improved significantly in target subject consistency and accuracy and rated themselves better students" (p. 19). Blechman also

found that the children's scores after training were similar to the scores of successful problem-solving youth.

Shure (1999), using previously identified risk and protective factors, developed an early school intervention program that included means-ends thinking, weighing pros and cons thinking, alternative solution thinking, and consequential thinking. Starting in kindergarten, teams worked with the children in the schools and with the parents at home. After implementing this program in a 5-year study, Shure concluded that the children were significantly further ahead than the comparison group in solving problems without violent outcomes (Shure, 1999). Thus, a problem solving approach may be useful in preventing youth violence.

In a program that used mediation for children, youth, and family problems, Smith (1995) found that a model for mediation improved communication and problem-solving skills. Similarly, Bry et al. (1986) found that family problem-solving training reduced drug use and school failure in their comprehensive 3-month training program with three adolescents. Behavior problems such as substance abuse, poor school attendance, and incomplete homework assignments improved. This program included identification of desired changes, observations of behaviors, weekly training meetings, education in problem focus maintenance, and positive reinforcement. The training "generalized beyond the training sessions and

decreased the targeted drug use and school failure by the end of follow-up" (p. 56).

Nangle et al. (1994) used problem-solving training in a clinical study of a young conduct-disordered youth and found the training benefitted this youth and his family. A "contingency management" program was used to assist the youth in reducing the severity of his violent outbursts. Each week the family would participate in 90-minute training programs that focused on family communication and active listening. Family group discussions and behavioral contracts resulted as the most beneficial practices this family gained from the training.

One school-based intervention program focused on skill development to reduce substance use and enhance social adjustment. Researchers found that the intervention "benefitted students' social adjustment and interpersonal effectiveness" (Caplan et al., 1992, p. 60). Positive program effects were also observed for reduction of substance abuse. It was concluded that short duration intervention may work well in early adolescents as a foundation for them to refer back on and use as a means for resistance. However, more extensive long-term training is advisable for both early and late adolescents (Caplan et al., 1992).

Nangle et al. (1994) found that problem-solving training led to "opportunities for members to comply and receive rewards for prosocial behavior" (p. 74). Reducing risk for youth is a worthy goal that can be

accomplished with the education of caretakers and youth alike. All youth are at risk if they are not allowed to navigate their development with caring adults setting boundaries and listening with complete attention to their trials and successes (Irvin, 1996).

Kieren, Maguire, and Hurlbut (1996) suggested a phasing model for training problem-solving skills. In a study of youth in a mentoring program and youth on a waiting list for that program, it was found that the youth in the program were less likely to "have started using substances, less likely to be aggressive, improved their school attendance, and demonstrated improved peer and family relations" (Leffert, Saito, Blyth, & Kroenke, 1996, p. 4).

### Conflict Resolution

One of the first and maybe most important skills learned is the successful communication of thoughts. There are times when positive communication fails and people become frustrated to the point of violence. When people learn to resolve conflict successfully and practice good communication skills, they are more socially accepted.

In a study on communication behaviors between second born children and their mothers, Dunn and Herrera (1997) proposed that children are less likely to take a partner's perspective when they themselves are feeling negative. Second, an association was shown between maternal and sibling conflict resolution styles. Results of the third group of findings explained that

those who scored higher on the emotional styles were less likely to use threats and more likely to use distraction. A final finding concerns the differences in gender, such as the pattern that females adapt in submissiveness and distraction. The significance of these findings can be applied to intervention policies and practices. Practitioners can use this knowledge to evaluate the family system and suggest strategies for improvement. Feldman and Wentzel (1990) found that boys whose parents were involved in their lives used more self-restraint.

There are several programs that are used with youth. Cohler (1991) stated that most resilient children from adverse backgrounds have a supporting adult in their life from outside the immediate family. This supporting adult can be a coach, a teacher, or a court-appointed mentor. Youth just want to be important to somebody. If they cannot be important for good reasons they may take any reason, even if it is bad. Garbarino and Bedford (1997) wrote of a youth who has been convicted of murder who stated that "he would rather be wanted for murder than not wanted at all" (p. 473). Chiles and Ross (1998) found that the delinquent group was lower in emotional tone. The nondelinquent group was able to "experience a wider range of emotions in a positive manner" (p. 20).

### Mentoring

There is a need for child and adolescent interventions and mentoring

may be a useful vehicle through which those needs can be met. Mentoring is increasingly used by organizations such as Chrysler, Procter and Gamble, and IBM. The National Education Association supports mentoring programs as well (Blinn-Pike, Kuschel, McDaniel, Mingus, & Mutti, 1998). Mentoring has become something Americans talk about with encouragement and national advertising campaigns designed to recruit mentors have become more frequent.

Mentoring is a promising approach to resiliency. Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) pointed out that in the early years of research on resiliency the term most used was competence. More recent work has implied that resiliency can be thought of in terms such as invincibility and invulnerability. Resiliency can be considered an active behavior that can be influenced by significant others. Zimmerman and Arunkumar demonstrated three models of risk introduction and behavior outcomes. The Protective Factor Model illustrates a risk factor that leads to an outcome that can be influenced by a protective factor. A mentor for the youth facing these risk factors (school failure, deviant behaviors, etc.) could make a difference by introducing protective factors, such as education, attention, and guidance, which could change the outcome for the youth. A mentoring program could provide youth with one or more concerned adults in their lives who will assist them in becoming more resilient and competent.

Programs can be constructed to train the mentors and planned



activities can be implemented for the needed intervention. Areas of greatest concern can be targeted and projected progress can be measured. Cohler (1991) suggested that youth who are able to "develop interests outside the family and manage to find support from adults outside the immediate family circle" will be more successful at dealing with troubles within the family (p. 170). Bogenschneider et al. (1992) stated that resilient children have one common theme and that is the presence of one adult figure in their lives who has helped them in the struggle to deal with the stresses they face. A mentoring program focused on increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors can fill this need.

Youth may not find good role models in popular media or video games. Schools may be the setting where a youth finds a significant adult role model. Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) wrote that schools can add resiliency policies to their curricula. In their article they give an example of two adolescents who have very similar circumstances. However, one has some unknown factor the other does not and has achieved some success in his life. The other young man, now an adult, does not have the skills needed to keep himself out of jail or hold down a job. What is the difference? The answer is not clear. Some children seem to be born with resiliency skills, whereas others have a significant adult in their life, whom they see as a mentor. This mentor entered their life and had a positive influence on them by showing care and modeling effective behavior. "Developmentalists have

come to recognize that it is the dynamic relationship between the child's competence alone and the child's competence in the company of a guiding teacher that leads to forward movement" (Garbarino, 1995, p. 124).

Garbarino (1995) further suggested that the community set high standards and let the youth know that they will be monitored. Youth are less likely to engage in negative behavior if they think someone will notice and do something about it. Increasing recreational activities that present constructive challenges will let youth know they can succeed at something. Opportunities for community service will give youth the idea that they are valued and needed. When these activities are set in a mentoring atmosphere, youth are doing things with another adult outside their immediate family and this presents a climate for influence by a positive role model.

In a study on girls, Nichols and Steinberg (1996) found that relationships are important, both one-on-one and group, to assist a youth in gaining power and courage in her life. Activities with mentors can provide youth with an occasion to voice their thoughts and can be a sounding board for their ideas. Some youth do not have an opportunity to find out what they think about important issues. Having an adult whom they trust is on their side can lead youth to talk about others and themselves in an exploratory manner. Exploring and developing a strong identity is what adolescence is all about (Marcia, 1966). van Aken, van Lieshout, and Haselager (1996)

proposed that youth whose self-description more closely matched the description of others were more apt to display competence during adolescence, and this helped in identity development.

In the Portland Peers Project (Mitchell, 1991), it was found that students significantly improved their skills in these five areas: knowledge, helping, listening, trust, and student empowerment. Mitchell did this by establishing a peer support system with students and staff already perceived as "natural peer helpers" and by training those helpers in substance use prevention, communication, helping skills, information referral, trust building, and decision making. These peer helpers were then provided with information and support to assist youth in the problems they face. Mentors may reduce the communication gap by drawing the youth into conversations, thereby practicing communication skills that they are not able to use with their family. When youth are with their mentors, they see how the mentor handles adversity and frustrations. Conversations may center on a problem the youth observed or that he himself experienced; outcomes and options can be explored.

Haugen (1998) proposed six areas that programs can focus on to assist youth in prevention of violence: anger management, anti-bias curriculum, conflict resolution, self-esteem, social skills, and general violence prevention. It is suggested that programs use these as guidelines in finding what the needs are of the community and individual youth. In their

evaluation of at-risk programs, Gager and Elias (1997) concluded that the resiliency paradigm is useful to evaluate successful implementation procedures. The results of the study showed that the programs are working with youth in high-risk geographic districts. However, further studies with consistent evaluations may be necessary to show continued success (Gager & Elias, 1997).

Understanding, identifying, and defining violence in the context of a person's specific environment are essential to the success of any violence prevention and intervention program. Also essential is identification and categorization and prioritizing of risk factors. Finally, it is important not to overgeneralize or catastrophize into an overly optimistic or pessimistic point of view (Corvo, 1997). The American Psychological Association has proposed seven general ideas for practitioners who work with youth in developing social skills: interpersonal cognitive problem solving; assertiveness training with children; preventing adolescent substance abuse through life skills training; the school transitional environment project; an ecological intervention and evaluation; the prevention of juvenile delinquency; and diversion from the juvenile justice system (Price, Cowen, Lorion, & Ramos-McKay, 1988).

The Youth and Families with Promise (YFP) program used a variety of mentor-guided activities with youth ages 7 to 16 from six Utah counties. College-age mentors worked with the youth in certain targeted areas. Utah's

YFP program is designed to address youth problems through early intervention with at-risk youth and their families. The program is based on a two-level volunteer mentoring approach, utilizing college-age individuals and grandparent-age couples (grand-mentors) who serve as mentors to youth and their families. The mentors work directly with the identified youth focusing on motivation and tutoring relating to reading and academic skills; structured recreation; community service; involvement in 4-H and other community youth groups; as well as fostering the development of social developmental assets. Youth, parents, and mentors also participate in monthly group activities and service projects. All mentors support the parent(s) and assist in the development of strong family bonds, better communication, and clear family rules. Parents and youth participated in quarterly family enhancement activities.

A local advisory/volunteer policymaking board provided direction and advice to the program administrators at each site. This board was made up of citizens from a cross section of the community. The YFP program was administered by Utah State University Extension. Referrals came from school administrators, officers of the Juvenile Court, religious leaders, or from parents. When a referral was received, the parents were contacted and the program was explained to them. If the parents desired to participate in the program, the process was started to assign college-age and grandparent-age mentors to the youth and his/her family. The college-age mentors were

often recruited from students attending one of Utah's universities, colleges, or technical schools. Pretest and posttest data were collected from youth, their families, mentors, and school officials.

### Hypotheses

Youth can gain protective factors and reduce risk factors in their lives with the help of specific programs and trained individuals. A program based on the results of the above research can make a difference in the lives of youth at risk for socially deviant behavior. Mentoring programs can use skill-building tools to enhance the skill levels in youth. The ability to resolve conflict nonviolently, solve problems, and make decisions in a manner that will present a more positive outcome can be increased. Youth involved in the YFP program will increase their skills in decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

- H1: Scores of program youth on decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution will increase from pretest to posttest.
- H2: Youth will report a decrease in problem behaviors from pretest to posttest.
- H3: Youth will report an increase in positive health behaviors from pretest to posttest.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This study evaluated a mentoring program that was intended to increase social skills acquisition in youth. The purpose was to raise resistance to problem behaviors in youth who are at risk because of academic or behavioral problems. Upon entering the program, the youth were asked to fill out an objective self-report questionnaire (Appendix). The survey was divided into 31 questions that assessed assets, 5 questions that dealt with thriving behaviors (such as eating well balanced meals), and 10 that addressed problem behaviors. At the end of 6 to 8 months the youth, their teachers, parents, and mentors were asked to fill out a posttest. During the 6 to 8 months the mentors spent approximately 1 hour a week with the youth, attended monthly whole-group activities, and participated in several group family activities.

#### Design

Pretests were administered to the youth and parents during the first month of participation in the program. The intervention included basic mentoring and relationship building skills developed by the Youth and Families with Promise Program for the purpose of teaching skills to youth

who are at risk, skills that are designed to enhance their ability to make choices, solve problems, and resolve conflict nonviolently. Although the impacts of mentoring varied according to the needs of the youth, a minimum of an hour per week is prescribed by the program. If a particular youth scored lower on the pretest in the area of conflict resolution, more time was spent by the mentor with that youth in the area of conflict resolution.

The program was designed for the mentors to conduct a planned activity with the youth for an hour each week. However, this may not have always been the case. The amount of contact varied and planned activities may have been replaced by simpler projects such as home work or a special event. After approximately 6 to 8 months of intervention, a posttest was filled out by the referral source (in this case the teacher was the referral source), youth, mentor, and the youth's parents.

### Sample

The youth were boys and girls between 7 and 16 years in age who resided in one of the six counties participating in the program. Each youth had been referred to the program by teachers, counselors, parents, or community services and law enforcement agencies. Criteria for referral were academic problems, behavior problems, and not having been to juvenile court more than once. Participating counties included Cache, Carbon, Iron, Kane, Salt Lake, Sanpete, Washington, and Weber. When a youth was



referred to the program, the parents were interviewed and, upon agreement to participate, a mentor was matched and assigned to the youth.

Responses to self-report questionnaires (Appendix) were used to compare pretest and posttest differences after 8 months of the intervention program. The questionnaire (Appendix) consisted of four sections designed to assess the condition of social skill ability, problem behaviors, thriving behaviors, and demographics surrounding the youth. Social skill ability was measured in the context of three of the Search Institute's 40 assets. Specifically, those measured were asset #32, planning and decision-making; asset #35, resistance skills (which tapped a dimension of problem-solving); and asset #36, peaceful conflict resolution. These three were chosen because they are closely tied to a person's social functioning. These three social skill measurements appeared in the first section of the questionnaire (Appendix) that had 31 questions dealing with eight measures related to the youth's commitment to learning and social competency.

The second section dealt with thriving behaviors and measured positive behaviors of the youth. Questions were asked concerning behavior such as eat well balanced meals, do things that were considered dangerous, save money, give up easily, and being a leader in an organization. The third section measured the problem behaviors that the youth had been involved in. Behaviors that were measured were alcohol consumption, drug use,

delinquency, violent actions, gang involvement, and criminal activity. In the last section gender and age were specified.

The parent questionnaire (Appendix) covered the same areas and asked the parent to rate the youth. There was an added section that measured how they feel as parents. A few example statements were "I feel close to my youth," "I enjoy being a parent," and "I feel good about how I am doing as a parent." The parent form also had a section for them to report their demographics such as gender, marital status, and relationship to youth. The referral source questionnaire (Appendix) was filled out by the person or organization who referred the youth to the program. This, as well as the mentor questionnaire (Appendix), was strictly reporting the social skill, thriving behavior, and problem behaviors. There was no demographic information on those two questionnaires. With each questionnaire the possible answers were a 5-point Likert-type scale or a quantity measure with "always" at the high end and "never" at the low end with a separate choice of "I don't know."

### Data Collection

Self-report questionnaire (Appendix) data were collected by program staff in such a way that anonymity was preserved. Parents were asked to allow privacy for the youth while they were filling out the survey so that the youth would be more apt to give an honest account. The questionnaires

were delivered to the participants in an envelope with their assigned number written on the questionnaire. Once they filled out the questionnaire, they sealed it inside the envelope that had their number on it as well. The envelope was then collected by the mentor or site coordinator. The dynamics of the population being served were such that collection of these questionnaires was difficult. It was possible that parents were busy working two jobs, and were not as able to devote needed time to concerns of their children. Therefore, added time was spent by the mentor or site coordinator assisting in the collection of the surveys. The site coordinator for each county logged the receipt of the envelope with its number for accounting records at their particular site. This envelope was then mailed to the data entry person at Utah State University who entered the responses into a data processor. Questionnaire responses were analyzed using SPSS.

### Intervention

The intervention included 6 to 8 months of mentoring at-risk youth that focused on three areas of social competency. Mentors helped youth develop problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution skills. Mentors spent one or more hours a week with the youth engaged in an activity one-on-one that was designed to focus on one skill. Once a month mentors were involved in a group activity with other youth and their mentors. Family activities were also arranged by staff members for the mentors, youth, and

the families of the youth. Newsletters each month kept all informed as to the activities and other pertinent information.

Mentors were recruited from surrounding institutions of higher education such as colleges, universities, or technical schools. When matching the youth and a mentor, similarities such as culture, religion, and personality were considered. The mentor then met with the youth at the next monthly activity or arranged a meeting by phone. After the first few introductory visits, the mentor provided a pretest for the youth to fill out. Parent pretest and a pretest for the referral source were also collected. Posttest data were collected from the same sources at the end of the school year.

### Statistical Analysis

Paired  $t$  tests to compare pre- and posttest mean scores of the respondents were completed. Means and standard deviations were calculated and reported in Chapter IV.

### Ethical Considerations

A human subjects proposal was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Utah State University. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning each youth a number for the purpose of tracking each individual. County staff assigned each youth a number and wrote that number on the individual

envelopes. The county staff did not see the questionnaires and the USU staff did not know the respondents by name, only by their assigned number.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Youth were tested at the beginning of the intervention period and then posttested approximately 8 months later along with their parent, mentor, and teacher. They were tested to measure the youth's increase in assets, increase in thriving behaviors, and decrease in problem behaviors. Parent well-being was also assessed. A statistical analysis comparing the pretest and posttest responses of the youth was conducted using SPSS. The results of testing each hypothesis, paired  $t$  tests, and frequencies of responses are reported.

#### Sample

Participants included 29 at-risk youth from Iron County, 28 from Carbon County, 31 from Weber County, 25 from Cache County, 8 from Salt Lake County, and 13 from Sanpete County. From the original 156 youth who took the pretest, eight of their pretests were dropped because of administration problems, and 14 moved out of the area so their pretests were dropped. The remaining 134 youth participating ranged from age 7 to age 16 with a mean age of 11. Of the total group, 71 were female, and 63 were male. Of the 66 matched pairs (youth who were there in the beginning and who were there to fill out the posttest), 38 were female and 28 were male. No

data were received from Salt Lake. Six of the matched pairs were eliminated because of inconsistent responses. Sixty-two of the responses were dropped because of not receiving either the pretest or the posttest for an individual youth.

The 36 parents who completed the posttest were mostly female (93.2%), 40.8% were married, 39.5% were divorced or separated, 7.9% were widows, and 9.2% have never married. Many youth had been in the program for 9 months at posttest. Some youth were not available for posttest because of moving too far away to participate. It was difficult to collect data from all participants.

### Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated: Scores of program youth on decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution will increase from pretest to posttest. To test for any statistically significant differences in the three developmental assets assessed, paired  $t$  tests were run on selected variables. Because of the small sample size alpha was set at  $p = .10$  in order to detect statistical significance. There were no statistically significant differences found on the three developmental assets. Yet, there was improvement on the individual variables. See Tables 1, 2, and 3 for mean comparisons on decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Youth that gained more assets had a higher score on the posttest, with the exception of four items: avoidance of

making decisions, hanging out with troubled friends, doing what friends want even if it will get them into trouble, and pushing back when they themselves were pushed. Change on these four questions showed the score as lower at the posttest than at the pretest. A positive mean difference indicates that the youth reported better planning skills at the posttest than at the pretest.

Table 1

Matched Pair Comparisons for Asset # 32: Planning and Decision Making

Questions	Pre		Post		Mean difference				
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>n</u>
Plan ahead	1.91	.72	1.95	.74	.04	.82	.45	.65	65
Avoid making decisions	2.16	.57	2.03	.64	-.13	.79	-1.30	.21	64
Make a list	1.60	.72	1.69	.71	.09	.88	.85	.40	65
Like decisions	2.20	.56	2.18	.56	-.02	.70	-.18	.86	65

Table 2

Matched Pair Comparison for Asset # 35: Resistance Skills

Questions	Pre		Post		Mean difference				
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>N</u>
Say no	2.29	.76	2.37	.72	.08	.87	.71	.48	65
Recognize trouble	2.25	.73	2.23	.64	-.02	.81	-.16	.88	64
Hangout with trouble	2.14	.77	2.22	.78	.08	.83	.74	.46	65
Do what friends want	2.06	.77	2.23	.73	.14	1.04	1.96	.29	66



In general the youth were more able to say no to trouble, yet, less able to recognize trouble, more likely to hang around trouble, and more likely to do what friends want even though they were doing things that were wrong.

As Table 3 shows, while no statistically significant change occurred, the youth average scores indicate that they did improve in ability to resolve conflict peacefully using helping behaviors toward others and self-calming skills. Overall the youth did improve on some items reflecting improvements on the assets.

Table 3

Matched Pair Comparison for Asset # 36: Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Questions	Pre		Post		Mean difference				
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>n</u>
Work it out	2.00	.77	2.12	.73	.12	.95	1.07	.29	66
Push back	1.82	.73	1.85	.71	-.03	.87	.29	.78	65
Try to talk it out	1.92	.76	1.98	.65	.06	.89	.56	.58	64
Help friends	2.15	.81	2.17	.67	.02	.87	.14	.89	65
Calm down	2.03	.68	2.11	.59	.08	.78	.79	.42	65

Hypothesis 2 stated: Youth will report a decrease in problem behaviors from pretest to posttest. To test for any significant differences in the problem behaviors assessed, paired t tests were run on selected variables. There were no statistically significant differences found on the

individual behaviors, yet there was individual item improvement on all the variables.

A Varimax factor analysis with Kaiser Normalization indicated that the 10 problem behavior questions fell strongly into two groups. The first group is labeled gateway problem behaviors because they seemed to be behaviors that led to other more serious problem behaviors. See Table 4 for mean comparisons on gateway and serious behaviors. Again it was found that the youth improved their scores from pretest to posttest. Yet, no statistically significant differences were found.

Table 4

Matched Pair Comparison for Problem Behaviors

Group	Pre		Post		Mean difference				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p	n
Gateway	7.41	2.94	7.17	3.15	-.24	3.45	-.57	.57	66
Serious	5.15	2.25	4.94	2.20	-.21	2.18	-.79	.43	66

Hypothesis 3 stated: Youth will report an increase in positive health behaviors from pretest to posttest. To test for any statistically significant differences in healthy behaviors, paired  $t$  tests were run on selected variables. There was one statistically significant difference found on the five thriving behaviors (saving money,  $p = .08$ ), yet there was individual item improvement on some variables. See Table 5 for mean comparisons.

Table 5

Matched Pair Comparison for Thriving Behaviors

Question	Pre		Post		Mean difference				
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>n</u>
Eat nutritious meals	2.00	.71	2.11	.69	.11	.87	1.00	.32	65
Do dangerous things	2.23	.70	2.20	.71	-.03	.88	-.28	.78	66
Save money	1.85	.71	2.03	.74	.18	.82	1.80	.08	66
Give up easily	2.00	.71	1.95	.65	-.05	.92	-.41	.68	64
Leader in community	1.69	.82	1.65	.79	-.04	.86	-.44	.66	62

There was a statistically significant difference in youth responses from pretest to posttest in the area of saving money. Although not statistically significant, there was mean difference improvement in the other thriving behaviors of youth from pretest to posttest.

## Descriptive Results

Frequencies for Youth

Eighty-eight percent of the youth reported that they would recommend this program to a friend and 97% would sign up again. When reporting what they liked best they said: "Having something fun to do," "Doing things together and talking on the phone," "He gets me out of the house and I can talk to him about my problems," and "Getting good advice." One 14-year-old

girl in Iron county wrote, "She has helped me a lot. She is a good friend that I can trust." One 12-year-old male in Iron county wrote that what he liked best about his mentor is simply that "he likes me." Others expressed this simple affirmation of importance that someone liked them as "having someone to hang out with and talk to." Another 13-year-old female wrote: "She was fun. She was there for me, always there when I needed a friend. She is a good friend and she pulled me out of depression and now I'm talking, growing, etc. She's my best friend. She is one heck of a person."

Youth reported doing things differently: "Learning how to handle my anger in a better way," "Being in a better mood," "Fighting less," "Respecting a grown-up," "I help out around the house more and am nice to people," "I try to make decisions more," and "I try not to be mean to other people." One youth reported a desire "to try to stay in school and go to college" because of the mentor's influence. Another wrote, "I work harder in school so I can go to college." Another youth reported being more organized and calm. Many youth reported being more responsible and respectful toward others. Many youth report completing more homework. Some reported that they smile more and are less shy. Several youth have gained new interests such as computers, sports, and college. Many report better personal hygiene and appearance. Some reported getting better grades. An 11-year-old youth from Carbon County wrote, "I will try to do my best in school and if I have any trouble or any arguments I can tell my mentor."

Another reported that "getting good grades, not hitting, doing all of my chores and homework" were things that were going to be done differently. Others reported trying to communicate better with people and be nice.

Frequencies for parent, teacher,  
mentor post

The following are results of a posttest completed by the parents of the youth and the teacher and mentor assigned to the youth. Teacher surveys were completed in May. Parent and mentor surveys were collected during the summer. Each was asked to assess the progress of the youth in the three selected assets, problem behaviors, and thriving behaviors. Tables 6 through 10 reflect the parental results, Table 11 is the teacher results, and Table 12 is the mentor results.

Parents reported that their youth were planning ahead more (25%), avoiding decisions less (25%), and liking their decisions more (30%). However they reported youth as making a list of things they need to remember less (26%). According to the parents, youth more often said no to friends who were asking them to do something they know is wrong (37%), were more able to recognize trouble (42%), were less likely to hang around people who would get them into trouble (64%), and less likely to do what their friends wanted when the youth did not agree with what they were doing (38%).

Table 6

Parent Posttest Results for Asset # 32: Planning and Decision Making

Question	<u>n</u>	% Less	% Same	% More
Plan ahead	36	14	61	25
Avoid decisions	36	25	67	8
Make a list	35	26	63	11
Like choices	36	6	64	30

Table 7

Parent Posttest Results for Asset # 35: Resistance Skills

Question	<u>n</u>	% Less	% Same	% More
Say no	35	6	57	37
Recognize trouble	36	5	53	42
Hang around trouble	36	64	33	3
Do what friends want	36	38	47	15

Table 8

Parent Posttest Results for Asset # 36: peaceful Conflict Resolution

Question	<u>N</u>	% Less	% Same	% More
Mad at someone-work it out	35	14	64	22
Push back	36	7	60	31
Someone else mad-work it out	36	12	64	22
Help friends work it out	36	6	71	23
Calm self down	35	11	64	25

Table 9

Parent Posttest Results for Thriving Behaviors

Question	N	% Less	% Same	% More
Eats well balanced meals	36	6	78	17
Does dangerous things	35	40	57	3
Saves money	36	11	56	33
Gives up easily	36	22	67	11
Leader in community	33	27	61	12

Table 10

Parent Posttest Results for Parent Well-Being

Questions	N	Less	Same	More
Overwhelmed as a parent	36	28	69	3
Handle demands	36	6	72	22
Youth more cooperative	36	8	44	47
Meet needs & responsibilities	36	3	61	36
Felt close to youth	35	3	63	34
Happy as a parent	36	3	56	42
Positive with youth	36	3	53	44
Consistent with youth	36	3	58	39
Felt good about how doing	36	6	64	31

Youth were more likely to work it out if they were mad at their friends (22%) or if someone else is mad at them (22%), and to help friends work it out if they were mad at each other (23%). Parents also think that their youth were more apt to calm themselves down when upset (25%), and yet more

inclined to push back when pushed by someone else (31%).

Youth were less likely to do dangerous things (40%) and give up easily (22%), more likely to eat well balanced meals (17%), and save money for things they want (33%), but were less likely to be a leader in their community (27%).

Parents reported feeling less overwhelmed, more able to handle demands, meet needs, and be positive and consistent. They also felt their youth were more cooperative and worried them less. The parents reported feeling closer to their youth and generally feeling good about how they were doing as a parent. Forty-seven percent of the parents attended the parent meetings and of that percent, 100% said the meetings were helpful, 78% said they were very helpful. When asked if they would recommend this program to other parents, 97% said yes. Ninety-nine percent reported that they would participate again.

One parent commented that this program was "a big boon.... It kept my kids busy and out of trouble." Another said it "provided her opportunities she would not have had." Table 11 indicates what teachers observed in the youth.

Table 11 percentages are based on answers "somewhat better" and "much better." With the exception of school attendance and parent involvement, the teachers report a 63-71% improvement in the youth. The following are comments written on the survey.



Table 11

Teacher Posttest Results

Questions	Youth improvements	
	N	n
Follows directions during class time and in doing assignments	55	39 (70.00%)
General attitude toward school work	55	37 (67.30%)
General attitude toward others	55	39 (71.00%)
Attitude when called on or addressed by the teacher	55	38 (66.70%)
Friendliness with peers	55	37 (67.30%)
Social skills displayed during class when working with other students	54	37 (68.50%)
School attendance	53	20 (37.70%)
Behavioral problems	55	35 (63.70%)
Completing assignments	55	39 (70.90%)
Parent involvement	52	10 (19.20%)

Teachers comment that the youth are less stressed, mellower, and more cooperative. They have seen improvements in general attitude and ability to follow directions. Youth are more responsible for self, school work, and have a better attitude toward others. One teacher commented, "[He] is coming out of his shell—His homework is much better and more complete." Another simply said "thanks." Similar comments include, "It was good for this boy to have a good friend. He needs more help at home and help with

homework." They were encouraged by the program's curriculum to teach social skills.

In Table 12, percentages are based on answers "somewhat better" and "much better." The mentors reported 85.7% of the youth need to be in the program next year. Mentors report that 76.9% of the youth gained a better attitude as a result of this program. Overall, 50 to 60% of the youth improved with the exception of parent involvement and getting along with others.

Mentors commented that they have a lot of fun with the youth and that they think they are making a difference in their lives. One mentor stated, "I love going to do stuff with him. I think that having a mentor in his life will help him learn and grow to make better decisions in his life." Another stated, "She is always excited about our activities. She loves when I ask her about things she does well. She loves showing me her achievements." The mentors saw the importance of their interactions with the youth and recognized that this service enhanced their own lives as well.

Table 12

Mentor Posttest Results

Questions	Youth improvements	
	N	n
Follows directions	91	56 (61.60%)
General attitude	91	70 (76.90%)
Friendliness with peers	91	52 (57.20%)
Social skills	91	52 (57.20%)
Behavioral problems	91	51 (56.10%)
Parent involvement	90	33 (36.70%)
Gets along with others	90	30 (32.10%)
Is motivated in school	89	50 (56.20%)
Plans ahead and follows through	90	56 (62.30%)
Has a positive outlook	90	61 (67.80%)

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary

##### Youth Reports

Differences in the youth pre/post self-report data did not show large statistically significant changes, yet most of the youth did show positive changes. The lack of big changes in the youth data from pretest to posttest is perhaps to be expected of self-report data from youth 7 to 16 years of age. It is possible that youth at this age were unable to discriminate about their behavior between one time and another.

As at-risk youth get older, we may expect an increase in problem behaviors. Our data show that the progression of problem behaviors was curtailed. We feel the project was a significant contributing factor to arresting this behavior. Success can be partially attributed to some of the things the youth liked about the program such as involvement in sports and other group activities with their mentors and others. Several commented that just having someone to be with when they needed to get out of the house was important to them. Many youth said they tried to be nicer, calmer, and more respectful with others as a result of knowing their mentor.

##### Parent Reports

Parents reported that their youth planned ahead more and had greater

resistance skills in most areas, including the ability to recognize trouble. They also reported that their youth were more apt to be out of trouble when with their mentor, and that they did not have to worry about their youth for that 1 or 2 hours a week. The parents reported feeling closer to their youth and generally feeling good about how they were doing as a parent.

### Teacher Reports

Teachers report greater ability to pay attention and more positive attitudes in the youth that were mentored. However, there was not much of an improvement in school attendance or parent involvement. School attendance often requires parent involvement for improvement; therefore, a low number in one is expected with a low number in the other. Considering the goal of this program, the high percentages in attitude and behavior improvements are encouraging.

### Mentor Reports

Mentors reported feeling close to the youth. They believed they were making a difference in the lives of the youth they mentor. They reported that the youth enjoyed their time together and a few even felt a bonding attachment that they felt was reciprocated. It is not just for the youth that they have joined this program. Mentors also reported that giving of their time, attending the training sessions, participating in social interaction, and giving back to humanity have been fulfilling for them.

### General

Lack of parent involvement is perhaps why the youth were referred to the program, possibly because they were having trouble getting along with others. Improvements in getting along with others are expected to take a longer period of time. Therefore, both these numbers are expected to be low. Parents, teachers, and mentors observed and reported greater changes than did the youth. In the previous year's pretest data, the youth reported a complete absence of involvement in community organizations. During the past year the youth have participated in county fair booths and concessions. All youth have joined 4-H and as a club member they have participated in group projects such as rappelling, hiking, field trips, craft and science projects, and wood working.

### Limitations

Two major problems with the instrument may have been the reason for nonsignificant results. The first major problem was that the questions on each subscale did not correlate closely enough to each other to be summarized together. Subscale scores are preferable to individual item scores in order to show more variability and to be more reliable. Also the questions may not have been sensitive enough to detect changes. Lack of variability may have also limited differences between pre- and posttests. The second major

problem had to do with the amount of time the youth were in the program. Eight months is too short of a time frame to expect to see changes in the youth that would produce statistically significant results. Another explanation for the nonsignificant results could be inconsistent use of the designed program by mentors with some of the youth. In other words, some youth may have had many mentor contacts and others very few.

It was not part of the program this year to monitor the dosage of the intervention or to gather demographic information. The main focus of this program was to measure where the youth were in terms of asset attainment, severity of problem behaviors, and lack of thriving behaviors and then provide enriching experiences with a mentor to give a boost to these youth. However, in the absence of statistical significance, and with these  $p$  values, the improvement cannot be described as not due to chance, and may be unrelated to the program (especially with no control group). Several youth and parents dropped out of the program due to geographical relocation. Some did not return the surveys.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future evaluations of the YFP program may show more impact using a post-then-pre design. Rockwell and Kohn (1989) have published a Post-Then-Pre evaluation format that may control for less than accurate pre-post time perceptions. For example, the question of whether or not the youth eat

a well balanced meal could be answered with the "often" response.

However, then the parent, youth, or both attend a workshop on nutrition and learn that what they thought was a balanced meal was in fact not balanced at all. When the posttest is delivered a week later, the respondent remembers the workshop and responds with a negative "not often" response, therefore skewing the result.

Attrition could possibly be controlled by following the youth to their new location. This program has added new locations in different counties in the state this year and has plans for more in the future. A more extensive survey collection policy, such as hiring someone part-time to collect all the surveys personally, may be a good strategy for getting a more complete return of the questionnaires. A small stipend could also be given for each completed survey.

A control group, complete dosage tracking, and demographic data would make the research design more sound. Qualitative data, perhaps using Q-sort, could also provide useful data that could be used to strengthen this research. It is suggested that program implementers continually evaluate the measurement instrument and update it to bring about the most efficient data-gathering tool possible.

A structured curriculum is also recommended for future implementation of the YFP mentoring program. There could be a collection of activities and lessons that coincide with a particular accomplishment and



can be used by the mentor to teach achievement at different levels according to the awareness of the youth.

### Implications for Practice

Because of the groundwork of this program, curriculum-centered mentoring programs can be started in any community. With the previous year's results the program has been refined each year. As this year is coming to a close, the next year looks all the more promising. Because of what has been learned about program implementation, curricula, and training, as well as evaluation, this program can serve as a model to other programs. Implementing a more systematic curriculum that all mentors use could have more impact on improving social skills, academic skills, and strengthening family interactions. At the present time materials have been gathered, curricula have been written, and evaluation tools have been refined so that this program can be implemented by any group or organization to benefit the youth in their community.

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## APPENDIX

Youth and Families with Promise  
Youth Questionnaire  
Pre Test

We appreciate your willingness to take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Your answers will be grouped together with others in the program. No one will be able to identify your individual responses. Please circle one of the choices for each of the following questions. Answer each question thinking about changes, or lack of change, you have made since working with your college-age mentor. Example: if the question was: *I try hard to get along with my parents*. I would ask myself, "How often do I try hard to get along with my parents?"

- **Often** would mean that I am trying often to get along.
- **Sometimes** would mean that I try sometimes to get along.
- **Not Often** would mean I am trying not often to get along.

1. I work hard to do well in school.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
2. I come to my school classes prepared with the things I need.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
3. I finish my homework in all my classes at school.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
4. At home and/or at school I read when I have free time.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
5. I plan ahead of time for things I need to do.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
6. I try to understand how my friends feel.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
7. I would say no if my friends wanted me to do something I know is wrong.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
8. When I am mad at someone, I try to work it out.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
9. I am determined to do well in school.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
10. I remember my homework assignments.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
11. If I need it, I ask for help on homework.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often
12. I spend time reading.	Often	Sometimes	Not Often

*Look on the back of this page for next question.*

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 13. I avoid making decisions.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 14. I listen to others without interrupting.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 15. I recognize situations that will get me into trouble.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 16. If pushed, I would push back.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 17. It is important for me to do well in school.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 18. When at school I participate in class discussion.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 19. I do my homework even when I don't want to.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 20. I don't read unless I have to.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 21. If I have a lot of things to do, I make a list,<br>so I remember.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 22. I am kind to others.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 23. I hang out with people who might<br>get me in trouble.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 24. When someone is mad at me, I try to talk<br>to them and work things out.                                      | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 25. I listen to my teachers.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 26. I spend time doing homework.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 27. When I look back at my decisions I like the<br>choices I have made.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 28. I care about other people's feelings.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 29. People who know me would say that I tend to<br>do what my friends want, even when<br>I don't agree with them. | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 30. When my friends are mad at each other,<br>I try to help them work it out.                                     | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 31. When I am upset, I calm myself down.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 32. I eat nutritious and well-balanced meals<br>most of the time.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |

33. I do things that could be considered dangerous.    Often   Sometimes   Not Often
34. I save up my money for things I want.    Often   Sometimes   Not Often
35. I give up easily when things become difficult.    Often   Sometimes   Not Often
36. I have been a leader in an organized group  
or organization during the last year.    Often   Sometimes   Not Often

How many times, if any, have you done the following things?

37. You skipped school without permission?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
38. Your parents were called for a conference  
with the principal or vice principal?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
39. You had a drink of alcohol?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
40. You smoked marijuana (grass, pot)?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
41. You smoked cigarettes or used tobacco?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
42. You got in trouble with the police?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
43. You cheated on a test?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
44. You stole something?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
45. You purposely damaged or  
destroyed property?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
46. You hit or beat someone up?    Never   Often   Sometimes   Not Often
47. Are you a ...    A. Male    B. Female
48. How old are you?
- A. 10 or younger    D. 13
- B. 11    E. 14 or older
- C. 12

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please put surveys in the provided envelope and seal it so your answers remain confidential.**

Youth and Families with Promise  
Youth Questionnaire  
Post Test

We appreciate your willingness to take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Your answers will be grouped together with others in the program. No one will be able to identify your individual responses. Please circle one of the choices for each of the following questions. Answer each question thinking about changes, or lack of change, you have made since working with your college-age mentor. Example: if the question was: *I try hard to get along with my parents*. I would ask myself, "How often do I try hard to get along with my parents?"

- **Often** would mean that I am trying often to get along.
- **Sometimes** would mean that I try sometimes to get along..
- **Not Often** would mean I am trying not often to get along.

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. I work hard to do well in school.                                       | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 2. I come to my school classes prepared with the things I need.            | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 3. I finish my homework in all my classes at school.                       | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 4. At home and/or at school I read when I have free time.                  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 5. I plan ahead of time for things I need to do.                           | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 6. I try to understand how my friends feel.                                | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 7. I would say no if my friends wanted me to do something I know is wrong. | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 8. When I am mad at someone, I try to work it out.                         | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 9. I am determined to do well in school.                                   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 10. I remember my homework assignments.                                    | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 11. If I need it, I ask for help on homework.                              | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 12. I spend time reading.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |

*Look on the back of this page for next question.*

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 13. I avoid making decisions.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 14. I listen to others without interrupting.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 15. I recognize situations that will get me into trouble.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 16. If pushed, I would push back.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 17. It is important for me to do well in school.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 18. When at school I participate in class discussion.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 19. I do my homework even when I don't want to.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 20. I don't read unless I have to.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 21. If I have a lot of things to do, I make a list,<br>so I remember.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 22. I am kind to others.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 23. I hang out with people who might<br>get me in trouble.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 24. When someone is mad at me, I try to talk<br>to them and work things out.                                      | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 25. I listen to my teachers.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 26. I spend time doing homework.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 27. When I look back at my decisions I like the<br>choices I have made.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 28. I care about other people's feelings.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 29. People who know me would say that I<br>tend to do what my friends want, even<br>when I don't agree with them. | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 30. When my friends are mad at each other,<br>I try to help them work it out.                                     | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 31. When I am upset, I calm myself down.  | Often Sometimes Not Often |
| 32. I eat nutritious and well-balanced meals<br>most of the time.   | Often Sometimes Not Often |

- |  |       |           |           |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|
| 33. I do things that could be considered dangerous.                                  | Often | Sometimes | Not Often |
| 34. I save up my money for things I want.  | Often | Sometimes | Not Often |
| 35. I give up easily when things become difficult.                                   | Often | Sometimes | Not Often |
| 36. I have been a leader in an organized group or organization during the last year. | Often | Sometimes | Not Often |

How many times, if any, have you done the following things?

- |   | Never | Often | Sometimes | Not Often |
|---|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| 37. You skipped school without permission?  |       |       |           |           |
| 38. Your parents were called for a conference with the principal or vice principal? |       |       |           |           |
| 39. You had a drink of alcohol?   |       |       |           |           |
| 40. You smoked marijuana (grass, pot)?  |       |       |           |           |
| 41. You smoked cigarettes or used tobacco?  |       |       |           |           |
| 42. You got in trouble with the police?   |       |       |           |           |
| 43. You cheated on a test?  |       |       |           |           |
| 44. You stole something?  |       |       |           |           |
| 45. You purposely damaged or destroyed property?                                    |       |       |           |           |
| 46. You hit or beat someone up?   |       |       |           |           |
| 47. Are you a ...   |       |       |           |           |
| A. Male   |       |       |           |           |
| B. Female   |       |       |           |           |
| 48. How old are you?  |       |       |           |           |
| A. 10 or younger  |       |       |           |           |
| B. 11   |       |       |           |           |
| C. 12   |       |       |           |           |
| D. 13   |       |       |           |           |
| E. 14 or older  |       |       |           |           |
| 49. What have you liked best about working with your mentor?                        |       |       |           |           |

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Look on the back of this page for next question.



50. What are one or two things that you try to do differently because of knowing your mentor?

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51. Would you recommend this mentor program to your friends? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

52. Knowing now what your involvement has been, would you still have signed up?  
\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please put surveys in the provided envelope and seal it so your answers remain confidential.**

Youth and Parents With Promise  
Parent Questionnaire  
Post Test

During the past school year your family has been involved in the "Youth and Parents with Promise Project." To help us know how to improve the program and your experience with it, please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Your answers will be grouped together with others in the program. No one will be able to identify your individual responses. Please circle one of the choices for each of the following questions. Answer each question thinking about changes, or lack of changes, your family has made since your youth has been working with his/her college-age mentors. Example: if the question was: *My youth tries hard to get along with me.* I would ask myself, "Since my youth has been assigned a college-age mentor, has there been a change in how hard my youth tries to get along with me?"

- **Less** would mean that they are trying less to get along.
- **Same** would mean that they are trying about the same as when their mentor was first assigned.
- **More** would mean they are trying more since they were assigned a college-age mentor.

What is the sex and age of the youth **for whom you are completing this survey**? If additional youth are in the program, please fill out separate surveys. When answering this survey, please think about only the youth for whom you are filling out the survey.

\_\_\_\_\_ Male      and age \_\_\_\_\_ 10 or younger    \_\_\_\_\_ 11 years old    \_\_\_\_\_ 12 years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ Female      \_\_\_\_\_ 13 years old    \_\_\_\_\_ 14 or older

- |   |      |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|
| 1. My youth works hard to do well in school.  | Less | Same | More |
| 2. My youth comes to class prepared with the things he/she needs.                                 | Less | Same | More |
| 3. My youth finishes his/her homework.  | Less | Same | More |
| 4. My youth reads when he/she has free time.  | Less | Same | More |
| 5. My youth plans ahead of time for things he/she needs to do.                                    | Less | Same | More |
| 6. My youth tries to understand how his/her friends feel.   | Less | Same | More |
| 7. My youth would say no if his/her friends wanted him/her to do something he/she knows is wrong. | Less | Same | More |

*Look on the back of this page for the next question.*

8. When my youth is mad at someone, he/she tries to work it out.	Less	Same	More
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9. My youth is determined to do well in school.	Less	Same	More
---	------	------	------

Thinking about the child that you are filling out this survey about, since they have been involved with their college-age mentor...

10. My youth remembers his/her homework assignments.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

11. If he/she needs it, my youth asks for help on homework.	Less	Same	More
---	------	------	------

12. My youth spends time reading.	Less	Some	More
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13. My youth avoids making decisions.	Less	Same	More
---------------------------------------	------	------	------

14. My youth listens to others without interrupting.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

15. My youth recognizes situations that will get him/her into trouble.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

16. If pushed, my youth would push back.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

17. Doing well in school is important for my youth.	Less	Same	More
---	------	------	------

18. When at school my youth participates in class discussion.	Less	Same	More
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19. My youth does his/her homework even when he/she doesn't want to.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

20. My youth doesn't read unless he/she has to.	Less	Same	More
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21. If my youth has a lot of things to do, he/she makes a list, so he/she remembers.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

22. My youth is kind to others.	Less	Same	More
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23. My youth hangs out with people who might get him/her in trouble.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

24. When someone is mad at my youth, he/she tries to talk to them and work things out.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

25. My youth listens to his/her teachers.	Less	Same	More
---	------	------	------

26. My youth spends time doing homework.	Less	Same	More
--	------	------	------

- |  |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|
| 27. When my youth looks back at his/her decisions he/she likes the choices he/she has made.                                  | Less | Same | More |
| 28. My youth cares about other people's feelings.  | Less | Same | More |
| 29. People who know my youth would say that he/she does what his/her friends want, even when he/she doesn't agree with them. | Less | Same | More |

Thinking about the child that you are filling out this survey about, since they have been involved with their college-age mentor...

- |   |      |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|
| 30. When my youth's friends are mad at each other, my youth tries to help them work it out. | Less | Same | More |
| 31. When my youth is upset, he/she can calm him/herself down.                               | Less | Same | More |
| 32. My youth eats nutritious and well-balanced meals.                                       | Less | Same | More |
| 33. My youth does things that could be considered dangerous.                                | Less | Same | More |
| 34. My youth saves up his/her money for things he/she wants.                                | Less | Same | More |
| 35. My youth gives up easily when things become difficult.                                  | Less | Same | More |
| 36. My youth has been a leader in an organized group or organization during the last year.  | Less | Same | More |

Since your youth has been involved with a college-age mentor, how often, if at all, have...

- |   |      |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|
| 37. You felt overwhelmed as a parent?   | Less | Same | More |
| 38. You been able to handle the demands your youth places on you?               | Less | Same | More |
| 39. Your youth been cooperative at home?  | Less | Same | More |
| 40. You been able to meet your own needs and your responsibilities as a parent? | Less | Same | More |
| 41. You felt close to your youth?   | Less | Same | More |
| 42. You felt happy as a parent?   | Less | Same | More |
| 43. You been positive with your youth?  | Less | Same | More |



- |     |  |     |    |
|-----|--|-----|----|
| 55. | Would you participate in this program again? | Yes | No |
| 56. | Would you recommend this program to others?  | Yes | No |

Any suggestions you would care to give those running the program would be greatly appreciated.

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**Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please put surveys in the provided envelope and seal it so your answers remain confidential.**

Youth and Families with Promise  
Teacher Questionnaire  
Post Test

Please fill out the following questions for the students in your class currently involved in the "Youth and Parents with Promise Project". How, if any, have the students' behaviors changed since being involved in the program. We realize that the students have only been in the program a short time, however, this will give us a baseline evaluation. Thank you for your help.

	Much Worse	Somewhat Worse	Same	Somewhat Better	Much Better
1. Follows directions during class time and in doing assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
2. General attitude toward school work.	A	B	C	D	E
3. General attitude toward others.	A	B	C	D	E
4. Attitude when called on or addressed by the teacher.	A	B	C	D	E
5. Friendliness with other peers.	A	B	C	D	E
6. Social skills displayed during class when working with other students.	A	B	C	D	E
7. School attendance.	A	B	C	D	E
8. Behavioral problems.	A	B	C	D	E
9. Completing assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
10. Parent involvement.	A	B	C	D	E

Other comments:

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Thank You!

Youth and Families with Promise  
Mentor Questionnaire  
Post Test

Please fill out the following questions for the youths for whom you have responsibility. How, if any, has the youth's behavior changed since being involved in the program. We realize that some of the youth have only been in the program a short time, however, this will give us a baseline evaluation. Thank you for your help.

The youth for whom you are to consider in filling out the survey is:

	Male	Age					
	Female	Number of months involved in the program					
			Much Worse A	Somewhat Worse B	Same C	Somewhat Better D	Much Better E
1.	Follows directions.		A	B	C	D	E
2.	General attitude.		A	B	C	D	E
3.	Friendliness with other peers.		A	B	C	D	E
4.	Social skills.		A	B	C	D	E
5.	Behavioral problems.		A	B	C	D	E
6.	Parent involvement.		A	B	C	D	E
7.	Gets along with parents.		A	B	C	D	E
8.	Is motivated in school.		A	B	C	D	E
9.	Plans ahead and follows through.		A	B	C	D	E
10.	Has a positive outlook.		A	B	C	D	E

Does this youth need to be in the program next year?

Yes

No

Other comments:

Thank you!